NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.*

No. 506 NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 8, 1906. **Price, Five Cents**

A LETTER FROM THE DEAD

OR, NICK CARTER'S PROUDEST MOMENT—

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER."

Nick Carter leaped upon the bridge of the steamship, and seizing Lacey lifted and hurled him bodily over the rail to the deck below.

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A LETTER FROM THE DEAD;

OR,

Nick Carter's Proudest Moment.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER FROM THE DEAD (?).

"It seems utterly impossible," said Nick Carter to the gentleman who was seated facing him in the library of his own house. "The man jumped overboard. I followed him into the water, and, as we reckon time, I could not have been three seconds behind him. From the moment he disappeared in the water I never saw him again, although I dived many times in the effort to do so.

"After that I swam twice all the way around the ship; and after that we waited there until the middle of the forenoon, which was five or six hours.

"By 'we' I mean Chick, Inspector McLaughlin, and myself.

"Your brother never appeared again, Mr. Smathers. We were all of the opinion that he was drowned, and that the tide had carried him away from our reach. It was the general idea that there must have been a floating piece of wood in the water when he leaped overboard, against which he struck and was stunned.

"The tide was very swift at the time, and was on the ebb. I had not a doubt then, and I have not one now, that Morgan Lacey was carried away, seaward, by that tide."

Those who followed the reports in the daily papers at the time of the murder of Gordon Granville, a man of affairs, living near New York, will remember that he was shot by a burglar, who had entered his home toward morning, and who was engaged in packing the silverware at the moment when Granville surprised him.

They will remember also that the police insisted that Granville had committed suicide, giving as a reason for their opinion that it was discovered within a few days after his death that his financial affairs were deeply involved, and that he had wrongfully hypothecated securities that had been placed in his possession by capitalists in New York.

But Nick Carter had taken the case on behalf of the widow, and he had traced the murder to one Morgan Lacey, who was a twin-brother of an actor whose stage

name was Ike Smathers, and who was billed as "The Man of Many Faces."*

At the time to which the detective referred as above, he had pursued Lacey to a tramp steamship, which was lying at anchor off Liberty Island, with the result that has already been described in the remarks just made to the actor brother of the criminal.

And these remarks were made in reply to a statement which Smathers had just made, to the effect that his brother was still alive, that he had written to him to that effect, and that in the letter received from him he had stated that he should return to New York very soon for the sole purpose of getting even with the men who had driven him away—his own brother, the actor, and Nick Carter.

"All the same, Mr. Carter," insisted Smathers, "I have the letter here. It is in Morgan's handwriting. It was written by him. Don't you think that, instead of arguing the matter, you had better read it?"

"Yes," replied the detective.

"You see, sir, I believe it to be my duty to bring it to you at once, and to make you aware of its contents."

He passed the letter to the detective, who received it in his hand, but did not at once open it. Instead, he asked:

"Before we go into this matter any further, Mr. Smathers, will you reply to a few very pointed questions?"

"To anything that you care to ask; yes."

"Is it your purpose to assume the position you did before in relation to your brother?"

"You mean——?"

"I mean, are you intending to stand between him and the law? Are you intending to protect him from me, or to attempt to do so?"

"Certainly not."

"You will remember that I once charged *you* with the crime committed by your brother, and that I did it because of the great resemblance between you."

"Yes."

"And that when you had succeeded in satisfying me that you had nothing to do with it, I charged you with having a twin-brother, which you emphatically denied."

"I remember it all, Mr. Carter. There is no need to remind me of it."

"Nevertheless, I prefer to remind you of it, for I will have nothing more to do with the case, or with you either, unless we are to play square. You have come to me of your own accord. Lacey is no less your brother than he was when I sought him that other time, now almost four months ago."

"You seem to forget, Mr. Carter, that he tried to murder me after blinding me with red pepper, and that at the very time when I was doing my utmost to aid him."

"I do not forget it."

"I shall not attempt to stand between him and the law, or between him and you. On the contrary, I will do all that I can do to aid you."

"Very well. With that understanding I will read the letter," said Nick; and he took it from the envelope and spread it open before him.

It was dated Buenos Ayres, Argentina, six weeks earlier.

It was as follows:

"Buenos Ayres, Argentina, May 30, 1906.

"To my most devoted and self-sacrificing brother, the 'Man of Many Faces.' Greeting.

"I suppose, Ike, that you've got it in your nut that I am food for fishes by this time, or, rather, long ago; but you were never more mistaken in your life. I am still very much alive, very energetically kicking, and very deeply determined to carry out the plans I have made, of which you will learn considerably more as you proceed with the reading of this letter.

"I haven't any doubt that the moment you receive this, you will run with it, like the good little boy you are, to Nick Carter; in fact, it is chiefly because I apprehend that you will do that very thing that I write it.

"Before he reads it it would, perhaps, help him to understand matters better if you should take the trouble to explain to him that I was always an expert swimmer. You might tell him about the medals I hold for that branch of athletics. He will understand, then, how nicely I fooled him when I dove into the water from the deck of the *Irene*, with him after me.

"I performed an old trick of swimming at that time; that is, I dove straight down, but the instant I was beneath the surface of the water I turned my body squarely around—a sort of 'right-about-face act' that you have seen me do often when we were boys; and the result was that I went directly under the keel of the vessel and came to the surface on the other side of it, while he was grubbing around the bottom of the bay in search of me, and while that fool assistant of his, with the inspector and the captain, was gazing over the side of the ship to watch him.

"It was dark yet, at the time, and I had no difficulty in climbing aboard unseen, and I was wondering where I would hide myself when the watch on the deck came along.

"I needn't go into details about the rest of that part of it. It is enough that the watchman was disposed to assist me, and he did so. He had had some words or something with the inspector, and he had also heard me say that I had money. He was out for the dough, so he led me into the hold of the ship and concealed me there.

*For particulars of this affair, read No. 503 of the Nick Carter Weekly, "The Man of Many Faces."

"After that he fed me and watered me for several days; in fact, until I found an opportunity to steal into the cabin one night and fix up a dose for the captain that made him so ill that, notwithstanding the tender care he had afterward, he died before we crossed the line."

The detective paused in his reading and raised his eyes while Smathers remarked to him:

"He evidently means there that he murdered the captain."

"Without doubt," replied the detective.

"How do you account for it, Mr. Carter?"

"Account for what?"

"That he should become such a conscienceless murderer all at once? I know that up to the time he killed Mr. Granville, he was always afraid to take life, and I am sure that he never did so until then."

"Probably not."

"It would seem that, having tasted blood once, as we say about wild animals, he became affected with a sort of mania for killing people."

"That is often the case," replied Nick. "I have known of such before."

"And here, it seems as if he drugged the captain in order to render him helpless, after which, while pretending to nurse him, he murdered him by inches."

"That is, I think, precisely what he did do."

"Will you proceed with the letter now?"

"Yes."

The detective continued the reading:

"After that," the letter continued, "everything was dead easy.

"You might explain to Nick Carter, right here, that I am a sailor as well as a swimmer. You can tell him that our father was rich when we were boys, and that it was always my fad then to sail yachts by wind and steam, and that it was my highest ambition some day to become a pirate and fly the skull and cross-bones.

"That ambition of mine has been realized. Shall I tell you how?

"We put in at Bahia, where I sent ashore and bought paint. When we sailed away from there the watchman and I—I need not mention his name—sounded the members of the crew, and those who did not fall in with our views, we drugged so that they slept soundly the following day; and while they were asleep, we chucked them overboard.

"It left us short-handed, to be sure, but still, we had half a dozen of about the choicest cutthroats you ever saw.

"Then we laid by in a calm while we repainted the hull of the steamer, changing it from black to white—and we changed the color of the funnel, too.

"Next I lettered a new name under the taffrail and along each side of her nose; and then I doctored up the log and the ship's papers, and we put in at Rio Janeiro, where, with a few dollars well applied, I secured an entirely new set of papers, clearances, and all that, so that I would be able to pass muster in almost any port of the world.

"It isn't at all a difficult matter to re-register from a South American port if you happen to have the dough and know how to use it.

"I disposed of the cargo there, too; and I also reported that we had picked up a small boat just across the line which contained three men, who were the only survivors of the steamship *Irene*, Captain Fitzgibbon, which had foundered.

"So, you observe, I made my plans beautifully. I was a free-lance. I had a ship and everything I wanted, and the sale of the cargo supplied me with ample funds."

The detective paused again.

"What an infernal scoundrel he is, to be sure!" he exclaimed.

Smathers nodded, and the detective proceeded:

"I shall not tell you anything more about my movements now. You know enough as it is. You see by this letter where I am. I have only to add that, while it is not our intention exactly to fly the black flag, we do intend to indulge in some piracy. It is a great life, Ike. You should be with me.

"But that is not the purpose of this letter. Its purpose is to tell you and Nick Carter what I intend to do with you."

CHAPTER II.

THREATS FROM A DESPERATE MAN.

"Here is where he begins to make his threats, I suppose?" remarked the detective.

"Yes."

"I have always observed," mused the detective, half-aloud, "that consuming egotism is inevitably the most pronounced characteristic of a criminal. A counterfeiter betrays himself to the secret agents of the Treasury by placing a mark somewhere on the plate he makes by which he will be able to identify his own bills at any time; a burglar adopts some peculiarity of procedure which is all his own, and he is delighted when he reads in the daily papers afterward that the police have recognized 'in this daring burglary the work of' So-and-so. It is always so."

"Morgan, then, is not an exception," remarked Smathers.

"Far from it. He is following the rule. His egotism leads him to make threats, and by those threats we will ultimately nail him."

"Will you go ahead with the letter?"

"Yes."

Once more the detective read from the letter.

"But for Nick Carter, I might still have been walking the streets of New York, although I must confess that I am glad to be here instead of there. However, that is no fault of that detective's. I owe him one, just the same.

"And you, too, my brother. I left you for dead when I came away so abruptly. I thought you were dead until I picked up an old New York *Herald* to-day, which somebody had brought down here with him, and which told me that you were still on earth.

"At first I didn't know whether to be glad or sorry; but I have finally determined to be glad, for the reason that it will give me an opportunity to do it all over again.

"You and Carter are doomed. I don't know just how or when the end will come, and I would not be fool enough to tell you if I did; but that it will come, you can gamble.

"Incidentally, you might warn that inspector and the assistant also—Chick—that I shall neither forget nor neglect them.

"I think that is about all, Ike. I can't tell just when you will see me. I am sailing the briny these days, and, like the roaring lion, seeking whom I may devour. I've got a ship that is properly registered, and which now nobody could recognize as the old *Irene*.

"I pose as the owner and the captain. That watchman is my first officer, and I have other choice scoundrels with him.

"Some day—I don't know when—I shall sail into New York harbor. When I do, you will hear of it; you and Carter, and in a way which won't please you. Until then I sign myself

MORGAN LACEY,

"Which, by the way is not the name I wear now."

"I suppose," said Smathers, when the reading of the letter was finished, "that you will admit now that my brother is alive, will you not?"

"I certainly will," replied the detective.

"And you understand now how he succeeded in escaping you when he leaped overboard from the deck of the *Irene*?"

"Oh, yes. It is plain enough now."

"I wonder, Mr. Carter, how well you understand Morgan Lacey?"

"I understand that he is an awful villain."

"I mean, do you realize that he is thoroughly in earnest in what he says there?"

"Oh, yes; I think so."

"That he fully intends to carry out those threats?"

"Yes."

"He tells the truth when he says there that while he was a boy he was always reading pirate stories, and that it was then his highest ambition to become a pirate and make men walk the plank."

"I don't doubt it in the least."

"Then, of course, we did not regard it seriously; but later those same ideas of his developed in other channels."

"I understand."

"And now, by what he calls a stroke of good luck, he is possessed of a ship, and has sufficient funds to carry out his hellish purposes."

"Yes."

"He is bold, fearless, daring almost to foolhardiness, reckless, implacable, revengeful, cold, sordid, cruel, and relentless. He is an enemy to fear."

"Do *you* fear him?" asked Nick, with a smile.

"I fear him for your sake—yes."

"You needn't trouble about me. This isn't the first time, or the first hundredth time, that I have been threatened."

"I suppose not."

"I can think of nothing that would please me more at this moment than to know that his vessel—I wish he had told us her present name—was in the harbor now."

"What would you do if she were?" asked Smathers.

"I would go aboard of her at once and arrest her captain for the murder of Gordon Granville," replied Nick grimly.

"And I would go with you and help you."

"What! Do you feel like that?"

"Yes. Morgan Lacey is my brother, but I am as anxious as you are to bring to a close his career of crime."

"He will point out the way for us himself after a little," said the detective.

"Do you think so?"

"He is sure to do so. His egotism will do that. He can no more help it or avoid it than he could commit suicide by holding his breath. Did you ever hear of anybody's doing that, by the way?"

"No; I cannot say that I ever did."

"If people who wish to take their own lives only thought of it—and tried it," said the detective, "there would be no suicides at all. It answers the question as to whether a suicide does a brave act or a cowardly one."

"What are you going to do now, Mr. Carter?"

"I am going to the Maritime Exchange. Would you like to accompany me?"

"Yes. I am laying off this week for a rest."

"Good. Spend the week with me. Be my guest. I will promise to give you recreation, and exercise as well, to your heart's content."

"I will do it with great pleasure."

"Come on, then. We will visit the exchange together."

It was half an hour later when they arrived at the exchange in Broad Street, and Nick made his way at once to the superintendent.

"I am in search of a little information which I think you can give me," he said, placing his card on the desk in front of that official.

"Yes, sir. What is it that you wish to know?" was the response.

"Will you look on your records and give me the history of a tramp steamship called the *Irene*, Captain Fitzgibbon, master?"

"I think I can give you that without referring to the records, Mr. Carter," was the reply.

"Thank you. Will you do so?"

"She foundered in the South Atlantic, about three or four months ago."

"Indeed! How do you know that?"

"The way we know everything here. It was reported."

"Will you tell me how it was reported?"

"One of her boats was picked up at sea containing three or four survivors. They reported that she had been in collision with a derelict, that her plates were stove in on the starboard side just forward of amidships, and that she sank in a few minutes with all on board save the few men I have mentioned."

"And how did they escape?" asked Nick.

"They managed to cut away a boat, which later they found floating right side up. They climbed into the small boat, and were picked up when nearly starved."

"Do you know who picked them up?"

"No. I will have to look that up."

"I will be much obliged if you will do so."

"Excuse me for a moment, then, if you please."

Nick and Smathers waited, and after a little the superintendent returned.

"I regret very much," he said, "that I cannot give you the exact information."

"How is that?" asked Nick.

"The report came to us by cable. The name of the ship which picked up the boat is, for some reason, omitted. But the account is none the less authentic."

"How do you know that, sir?"

"The names of the rescued sailors are given. They were reported to the owners, who found that they were correct."

"Was the report sufficiently authentic to satisfy the underwriters?"

"Certainly."

"And do you know if the insurance was paid?"

"I think it was."

"Thank you very much. Now, can you do me one more favor?"

"With pleasure, if it is possible, sir."

"Can you point me out a man, or suggest a man to me, who has a talent for remembering the 'cut of a jib'?"

"You mean that you want a man who will remember a vessel that he has once seen, or sailed upon, no matter what changes have been made in her rig?"

"Or color—yes."

"Almost all sailors are that way, sir. All have that talent."

"I am aware that they all think they do; I want one who really possesses the talent I have mentioned."

The superintendent pointed across the room toward an old man who was seated in a corner reading a paper and smoking a pipe.

"Do you see that man with the white beard over there reading?" he asked.

"Yes."

"His name is Rossiter. He is a retired Sandy Hook pilot. He is your man. There is none better. He remembers every ship that has entered this port since he became a pilot. He is a perfect cyclopedia for that sort of thing."

"Is he employed now?"

"No; except that he is a sort of book of reference for us here."

"Will you introduce me to him?"

"It isn't at all necessary. Just go across to him and say, 'How are you, Captain Rossiter? Will you give me a little information?' After that it will be easy sailing."

The detective thanked the superintendent and crossed to the ex-pilot.

"How are you, Captain Rossiter?" he said to him.

"Ship-shape, thankee. How does the course lay with you, sir?" was the instant reply.

"I'm steering for information," said Nick, smiling, "and I thought I couldn't do better than to head for Port Rossiter."

The old man rose to his feet at once.

"I'm your man, my hearty!" he said, chuckling with good humor. "You're a regular cutter in your rig, mate, although it's easy to know that you're no sea-dog."

"Not much of one, that's true," laughed the detective. "All the same, I've smelled the salt of the water. Are you employed at present, captain? And if not, would you like to earn a hundred dollars or so—perhaps more—by looking about the harbor for me for a few days?"

"Aye, aye! That I would, sir. Pipe all hands aft for orders. Shall we talk here, or will you go somewhere else?"

"We'll go around the corner and have luncheon, and while we are eating, we will talk," replied the detective.

CHAPTER III.

A PIRATE'S DARING CHANCES.

"Captain," said Nick, when, accompanied by Smathers, to whom the pilot had been introduced, they were seated at the table in the restaurant, "do you happen to remember ever having seen a tramp steamship—I don't know where she hailed from—named the *Irene* and commanded by a Captain Fitzgibbon?"

"That I do, sir, well! She foundered off the coast of Brazil some'eres about three months ago. Fitz went down with her. I knew him, too."

"Is your ability to keep a secret as good as your memory, captain?" asked Nick then.

"I reckon it is, sir," was the reply.

"Very well then. The *Irene* did not founder anywhere. She is afloat now, under another name. Captain Fitzgibbon was not drowned; he was murdered."

"What's that?"

"You heard me."

"Is it true, sir?"

"As true as that you are sitting there looking as if you'd seen a ghost."

"I feel as if I had, sir."

"It is true that the *Irene* is afloat to-day under another name, painted a different color, and hailing from a different port. I expect that she has had other alterations made in her appearance, too."

"That wouldn't make a mite of difference to *me*. I'd know her," said the old captain.

"No matter what kind of clothes she happened to wear, eh?"

"It wouldn't make a mite of difference to me," he repeated. "Would you mind telling me how it happened?"

"Not at all."

"Well, sir?"

"My information is not very complete on the subject, but as nearly as I can make out about it, part of her crew got their heads together and decided that they wanted the ship."

"Mutiny and piracy?"

"Something very much like that, yes."

"And then what?"

"They were led, of course, by a master mind for that sort of thing. We will refer to him as the chief."

"Yes."

"Well, the chief drugged the captain, and, later, murdered him. Still later, the members of the crew who would not join in the act of piracy were also drugged and thrown overboard."

"It sounds a leetle bit like a dime novel, doesn't it, Mr. Carter?" asked the captain.

"It sounds very much like one."

"But it's true, eh?"

"Yes."

"Lay her full and by, then, and let 'er go."

"After that the chief steered her for the doldrums, where they laid to until they had put a few coats of white paint over the black. Then they painted out her name and substituted another."

"And what was that one, eh?"

"I don't know."

"I see. That's where I come in."

"Exactly. After all that was done, they headed for a port somewhere. I am informed that it was Bahia, but I'm not sure about that."

"Well? And then—?"

"The rest I don't know very much about. My information is that they touched at several ports in South America; that somewhere down there the chief sold the cargo for what he could get. It is reported that he went to Rio, where, by bribery, he secured a new register and new clearances. I *know* that somewhat later he was personally at Buenos Ayres."

"And what then?"

"That is all I know, save that I am informed that, sooner or later, she will enter this port under her new name and register."

"And you want me to keep a watch out for her?"

"Yes."

"Until she shows up?"

"Yes."

"No matter how long it takes?"

"No matter how long you have to keep watching."

"When do I begin?"

"Now. You will be paid at the rate of a hundred dollars a month and all your expenses. You will have a fast gasoline launch which belongs to my yacht, the *Nadja*——"

"So you're the Mr. Carter who is the owner of the *Nadja*, are you?"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, I'm glad to know you. She's the trimmest craft in these waters."

"Thank you. You will have the launch at your disposal, with a man to run it for you, and another to wait upon you—and you will be the admiral of the fleet."

"Oh, I am the crew and the captain bold,
And the mate of the *Nancy*, brig;
The bo'son tight, and the midshipmite,
And the crew of the captain's gig,"

cackled the old man, with a laugh. "All that is very fine, sir. I might say to you that it will give me so much pleasure to be captain of a ship once more—I suppose we can call the launch a ship, can't we?—that I don't really want any pay. Howsumever——"

"You will accept the pay, just the same, captain."

"If you insist, sir, of course."

"We will consider that settled, then."

"Aye, aye."

"And you will go at once, as soon as we are through here, to the *Nadja* with me, where you will take charge of the launch?"

"Aye, aye. I would like to ask a question or two, though."

"Well?"

"They don't know about what you have told me at the Marisime, do they?"

"Not a word."

"Their understanding is that the *Irene* foundered, as I told you, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me how *you* know differently?"

"I will tell you this much: The man to whom I have referred as the chief of the pirates happens to be an old acquaintance of mine. He is also my enemy and the enemy of Mr. Smathers. He has written to us from Argentina, detailing all that I have told you."

"Maybe he lied."

"Possibly he did; but I am inclined to think that for once he told the truth; or, at least, part of the truth."

"Why did he write to you at all and give you all that information?"

"You will have to ask him that question when you see him, captain."

"Maybe he won't tell me. It strikes me as curious."

"Do you doubt it?"

"Not exactly; but I'm trying to get the hang of it."

"I have given you that—as much as I can."

"I don't see why he should write to you and give himself away, sir."

"Because he is a fool, I suppose. Because he hates me and this gentleman here, and he wished to tell us what he had done, and also that, after a little, he was intending to sail into the port of New York for the express purpose of killing us both."

"Aye, aye. *Now* I understand. You see, sir, I'm a simple man and a seafarin' man, but, all the same, I know something about human nature; and there ain't only two things that would have induced him to write that letter."

"What are they, captain?"

"Love, or hate. If he was in love with a woman he might have done that, or—as is the case—if he hated anybody like pizen he might do it."

Nick noticed that Smathers made a violent start when the old captain made the remark about love, and he turned to him at once.

"What is it, Smathers?" he asked. "What occurred to you then?"

"I will tell you about it presently," was the reply.

"No. Tell me now. We have taken the captain into our confidence."

"The captain's remark suggested something to me that had entirely escaped my memory," he replied.

"What is it?"

"It reminded me that Morgan was very much in love with a young woman here in New York before he went away."

"Is the pirate's name Morgan?" interrupted the captain, before Nick could make a remark.

"Yes," admitted the detective.

"Well, he ain't the first pirate by that name, is he?"

"No."

"Nor the last, I reckon."

"Tell me about that girl, Smathers," said Nick.

"I don't know much about her, only that it occurs to me as more than likely that he has also written to her."

"Without a doubt."

"As I remarked," said the captain, again butting in, "that is one of the things that would make him write letters. *Love!*"

"What sort of a girl is she?" asked the detective of Smathers.

"A crook, like himself," was the immediate reply.

"Do you know that?"

"I have heard him say she was the slickest article that ever came down the pike, or words to that effect."

"Did he say what her line was?"

"I imagine that she's a sort of all-around crook, for a woman. I suppose she is a pickpocket, or a shoplifter, or something like that. I have seen a picture of her. He showed me one once."

"So you would know her again, if you saw her?"

"I think so."

"What sort of a looking woman is she?"

"She is beautiful."

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Distinctly so. Judging from the photograph alone, I should say that she is about the last one you would pick out for a criminal. Big, round eyes—blue, Morgan said they were—and a pair of lips that form a regular Cupid's bow."

"Do you know her name?"

"I know what Morgan said it was."

"And what was that?"

"He called her Nan; Nan Drummond."

"I never heard of her," said Nick. "Do you know or have you any idea where she can be found?"

"Not the slightest, unless——"

"Well?"

"Unless around some of his old haunts. I rather suspected at one time that she was Morgan's wife, but I don't know that to be so."

"All the same, we will look her up. I don't think she will be difficult to find, and if we find her we will discover a whole lot more about Morgan Lacey. That is as sure as eggs."

CHAPTER IV.

JIMMY DURYEA, THE GENTLEMAN CROOK.

"NAN—Will you communicate with the actor-brother of your friend who has gone to South America for his health. Something to your advantage. Address MANY FACES, 321 *Herald*."

The above personal appeared daily in the columns of the *Herald* for a week, but, notwithstanding that fact, it brought no response.

Also, nightly, for a week, Captain Rossiter reported to

Nick Carter that there was "nothing doing" in the harbor.

Every effort that the detective had made during that time to get some trace of the woman, or girl, Nan Drummond, met with failure.

She was not known—by that name at least, or by the description that Smathers was able to give of her—to the police, to any of the stool-pigeons, or to anybody that Nick Carter had been able to find.

In the meantime, the detective, of course, was not devoting his entire attention to the case of Morgan Lacey. In fact, he devoted very little time or thought to it.

There were other matters on his hands, so that, bit by bit, he dismissed the Lacey affair from his mind; and would have done so altogether had it not been for the fact that the old captain was still busily at work watching the harbor and reported to him each evening.

Smathers spent the week of his vacation in Nick's company, going about with him constantly; and since that time he came around frequently to see the detective, for a great friendship had sprung up between them.

It was near the end of the third week after the receipt of the letter from Lacey when one of those inexplicable incidents happened which are usually catalogued under the heading "luck."

It happened in this way:

The detective was strolling leisurely along Sixth Avenue, between Eighteenth and Nineteenth Streets—in fact, he was directly in front of the Siegel-Cooper store when it occurred.

The time was evening. The big store was closed; but there were still many people on the avenue.

Directly in front of Nick, and distant from him not more than eight or ten yards, all the way from Fourteenth Street, a woman had been walking.

Nick had not noticed her particularly, more than to be conscious of the fact that she was there, that she was rather tastefully clothed, and that she walked with exceeding grace.

But just as they were approaching Nineteenth Street a quiet, sedate-appearing man, who had the outward look of a gentleman, encountered the woman and stopped suddenly:

"Hello, Nan!" he exclaimed, apparently with great surprise.

Nick stopped, too. The name and the manner in which it was spoken at once attracted his attention. He turned, so that he appeared to be looking at the display in the windows of the store, but in reality he was watching the two persons who had just met.

The encounter did not appear to please the woman at all.

In fact, when she was first accosted, she did not reply, but turned aside and attempted to pass on; but the man stepped in front of her and addressed her again, this time in a very different tone.

"Hold on, Nan," he said. "None of that. Not so fast. Where are you going?"

"That," she replied quietly, "is none of your business."

"Oh, yes, it is. I'll make it my business, anyhow. I didn't know that you were in New York, and I don't suppose you had an idea that I was here, either, did you?"

"No; I supposed you were in——"

She paused in her remark, and he laughed in her face.

"Exactly," he said. "I think I have a little account to settle with you about that. But I won't do it just now, so you needn't be frightened. It's the man who put you up to it that I wish to interview first. Where is he?"

"I don't know," she replied, and Nick could see that she was visibly uneasy.

"I think that is a lie," the man retorted, although he uttered the words very quietly and calmly; "but I couldn't expect you to take a different course, I suppose. Now, answer my first question."

"What was it?" she asked.

"I asked you where you were going."

"I did answer it."

"You told me that it was none of my business."

"Well, that is the truth, isn't it?"

"Not quite. Anyhow, I'm going to find out. I'm going with you."

"You shall not do anything of the kind."

"Won't I? You watch my smoke! I shall stick to you like a leech until I find out."

The woman looked hurriedly around her, as if for some means of escape from her tormentor, and then for the first time they both discovered Nick where he was standing, looking in at the window.

Instantly, as if she saw in him a way out of her difficulty, the woman ran to the detective and seized him by the arm.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, in a voice that was filled with real or well-simulated fright. "You are a gentleman, I know. Protect me from this man! Protect me from him!"

"Certainly," replied Nick, wheeling instantly.

The man had followed her closely and was now within a few feet of the detective; and Nick, with a quick motion, put the woman behind him—or, rather, he stepped in front of her and confronted the man.

"I guess you have carried this thing about far enough, sir," he said to him.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded the man impertinently.

"I am the sort of a fellow who hasn't a bit of use for mashers," replied Nick, pretending that such was his view of the affair, "and unless you light out of this mighty quick, I will be to the trouble of spoiling some of your good clothes for you."

The stranger openly sneered at this; but instead of resenting it in the manner that the detective expected he would, he laughed ironically.

"Do you know who that woman is to whom you offer your protection?" he asked.

"It is enough for me that she *is* a woman, and that you are annoying her," replied the detective, determined to carry the conversation as far as it would go.

He was determined to lead the man on, if he could, for already he was more than half-convinced that this was the very woman for whom he had been searching.

Her name was Nan; she was beautiful and young; she carried herself like a queen, and it was evident that she had acquaintance with a man who—to Nick Carter—was very plainly a professional crook.

"I suppose it hasn't occurred to you to wonder why it is that I annoy her, has it?" asked the man.

"No," replied Nick. "It hasn't. It is sufficient that she is annoyed."

The woman still stood close to Nick. She took no part in the conversation, and she did not attempt to run away. It was therefore evident to the detective that she relied upon him to free her finally from her persecutor, who, for some reason, she did not wish to know where she lived or where she was going.

He regretted that their positions were such that he could not see her face; but he had to be satisfied with things as they were.

"Would you like me to tell you who she is?" persisted the man.

"I would like you to take yourself off about your business," retorted Nick.

"Well, maybe I'll go, and, again, maybe I won't. We'll see about that presently. The woman whom you think I have been annoying happens to be my wife, whom I haven't seen for three long—very long and exceedingly tedious years."

"He lies!" said the woman, in a low tone, speaking almost in Nick's ear.

"I don't lie, and she knows I do not. She is my wife—or, at least, she *was* my wife when I saw her last. She may have secured a divorce in the meantime, for all I know."

"He lies!" repeated the woman.

"She is Nan Drummond, a thief, a shoplifter, a pickpocket, and the slickest that ever was, Mister Man; and I am—or was—her husband."

Here was a complication. Here, also, was an opportunity for the detective to turn and look into the face of the woman.

"Is that true?" he demanded of her sharply, as if he were deeply shocked by what he had just heard.

"No," she replied, wringing her hands together. "It is a lie; a malicious lie. I never saw the man before in my life. It is true that my first name is Nan, but my name is not Drummond. When he spoke my first name as I met him a moment ago I thought for a moment that I ought to know him and had forgotten who he was; but now I know that I never saw him before."

This was clever, at least. Nick thought so.

The man emitted another ironical laugh.

"Never saw me before!" he ejaculated. "That's a good one, that is. Look here, stranger, I'm not going to fight with you over a woman like Nan Drummond. Life is too short for that, and I can find her when I want her, I guess. But I'm not in the least afraid of you. I want you to understand that."

Nick only smiled at this, and it seemed to anger the man.

"I'll tell you why I won't fight with you," he said, with an ugly frown on his face.

"All right," said Nick.

"It's because I'm on my good behavior. If I should get into a row, and get pinched for it, it would go mighty hard with me, for the reason——"

He stopped abruptly, and Nick half-jeered at him:

"Well, go on. For what reason?"

"I'll tell you what reason, and I don't care who hears it, either, for, after all's said, I have served out my time, and there ain't a thing against me now. I told you that she is a crook; well, I'm one myself. Now, you've got it. You can take it or leave it!"

Nick merely shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you think about that, Mister Man?" jeered the stranger.

"I think that you are a fool for telling me—that's all."

"Maybe I am, and, again, maybe I'm not; but I'll tell you one thing straight from the shoulder. I'd rather you'd know that I'm a crook ten times over than to have you think that I'm a masher, who goes about speaking to women he doesn't know. A pickpocket or a sneak-thief is a whole lot more respectable than that sort."

Here was a bit of philosophy with which the detective thoroughly agreed, although he had scarcely expected to hear it enunciated from such a source.

"I'm going to take you at your word, and go away and leave you in a moment," continued the self-styled crook, "but I want to say a thing or two more before I do it."

Nick shrugged his shoulders again.

"All right," he said. "Fire away."

"I was put away for four years and six months, and got off with three years for good behavior. I've been out about six weeks now, and I've been walking the straight and narrow path ever since. I don't know how long that will last, and it doesn't make any difference to this meeting, as I know of.

"What I want to say is that, while I have no proof of it, I am satisfied that this woman, who was my wife at that time, and should be now, gave me the double-cross.

I'm just as sure as that I'm standing here that she perched on me, and that it was through her and a crook named Morgan Lacey that I was put away. I'm not going to harm a hair of the head of either one of them till I have proof of it; but when I do get the truth——

"That's neither here nor there, and it doesn't interest you, anyhow; but if you'll take the trouble to make a few inquiries in the right quarter, you will find out that Jimmy Duryea is about as square as they make 'em in my line of business.

"That's all. You can see her home now, if you want to. When I want her, I'll know how to find her."

He turned on his heel and walked rapidly down the avenue, leaving Nick Carter and Nan Drummond staring after him.

CHAPTER V.

NICK CARTER'S SLICK WORK.

"I hope, sir, that you did not believe what he said," murmured the woman, as soon as she was alone with Nick.

"I rarely believe much that I hear," replied the detective philosophically, "especially when the statement comes from a self-confessed crook."

"But he insisted that I was one also."

"I know he did."

"Did you believe that, sir?"

"I don't think that I paid any attention to it. What is the use of continuing a disagreeable subject?"

"I wish to place myself right in your estimation."

"Very well. Just consider that you have done so. Forget it. Are you going home? Shall I escort you to your destination? Mr. Jimmy Duryea may be waiting around that corner, where he turned as if he were going to the L station."

"If you will be so kind," she said. "I confess to you that I am afraid of the man. I was always——"

She stopped, and Nick laughed to show that he was not in the least surprised by her slip.

"So you are old acquaintances, after all, eh?" he said.

She put out one hand and took his arm. Then she started him along the avenue by her side, leaning with a tender pressure against him as they went.

"Yes," she replied softly—so softly that he barely heard her. "We are old acquaintances. He told the truth—at least, part of the truth."

"How much of the truth, Nan?" he asked boldly, pressing her arm just a little tighter against his side under his own.

She stopped instantly, but she did not relinquish her hold upon his arm.

"Who are you?" she demanded tensely. "Are you a fly cop?"

"Heaven forbid!" laughed the detective; "but you haven't answered my question."

They moved on again slowly, and there were several moments before she replied. Nick remained silent, also.

"Will you tell me who and what you are?" she asked again then.

"When you have answered my question, I will."

"What was it?"

"How much of the truth did he tell when he was giving me his history—and yours?"

"It was all true; every word of it, except when he said that I gave him the double-cross. I never turned on anybody yet—never."

"So you were his wife when he was sent away, were you?"

"Yes; but I went to Dakota at once, and got a divorce. I told him I was going to do it. That was why he thought maybe I had."

"I shouldn't have thought you would have been so mighty particular," said the detective, with that easy familiarity that he knew so well how to assume. "A gun like that chap ought to be a good fellow to tie to—or to remain tied to."

"You're a gun yourself," she retorted, laughing. "If I hadn't guessed that by your talk and your manner I would never have told you what I have."

Nick chose to ignore this remark. He only chuckled knowingly, and again pressed her arm against his side.

"I suppose you wanted that divorce so's you could marry that other chap," he said.

"What other chap?" she demanded, in an utterly expressionless voice.

"I think Jimmy said his name was Lacey, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Was that the reason you got the divorce?"

"No."

"What was the reason?"

"I tell you I am afraid of Barefaced Jimmy."

"Is that what the guns call him?"

"That's what the cops call him."

"Why?"

"Because he's so barefaced; so cheeky; so impudent. He isn't afraid of anything. He'd just as soon as not walk right down to police headquarters this minute, announce who he is, and put the whole bunch on my spoor."

"Spoor!" said Nick. "That's a South African expression."

The woman laughed with evident amusement.

"I gave myself away that time, didn't I? Well, that's where I'm from. That is where we both came from—Jimmy and me."

"Is that why you are afraid of him? Because you think he will peach on you?"

"No. With all Jimmy's faults, I am sure he wouldn't do that."

"Then, why?"

"Because I think that some day he will kill me. He swore long ago that he would if I ever left him, and he has an unfortunate habit of keeping his word."

"It's all on account of that other fellow, I suppose?" said Nick tentatively, bringing her back again to the subject of Lacey.

"Yes; so far as he is concerned, it is."

"Isn't it that way, too, so far as *you* are concerned?"

"Not a bit of it! not a bit of it!" she laughed.

"So you're not in love with the other fellow—Lacey—after all, eh?"

"Nay, nay, Pauline! But he is in love with me, all right."

"Well, you ought not to blame him for that. I reckon he isn't the only one, either."

"Oh, I don't know."

"I'm beginning to get a little that way myself, and I haven't known you twenty minutes yet."

"Don't talk through your hat, Mr.—— What's your name, anyhow? You haven't told me that."

"I have got several that I use on occasion. Which one will you have?"

"I'll have the real one, if it is all the same to you, and if we are to play on the square with each other."

The detective immediately pretended to be vastly amused. He laughed quite heartily, and presently she demanded to know what was the matter.

"It struck me as funny that you should ask me for my real name, that is all," he said.

"What is there so funny about that?"

"I was wondering what the effect would be upon you, if I should take you at your word and tell you."

"Why? Do you think I have heard it before?"

"Maybe not *my* name; but a name just like mine; yes, indeed!"

"What is it, then?"

"Carter."

"There isn't anything very funny about that. What is your first name?"

"Nick."

"Nick Carter? I don't see—— *Oh!*"

She stopped in the street, let go of his arm, stepped in front of him, and turned and faced him; and Nick slapped his thigh and laughed as if he were intensely amused.

"Is that straight goods?" she demanded.

"Dead straight, Nan."

"You're not—— Oh, you make me tired! Come along and stop your fooling!"

She seized him by the arm, and they started on again, crossing Twenty-third Street.

"Honest Injun, Nan, that's my name; my real, true, baptismal name, if anybody should ask you," said Nick.

"All right," she replied, tossing her head and laughing with him. "You don't wear it all the time with your every-day clothes, I suppose? I guess you are wise to the fact that you've got a namesake in this city, aren't you?"

"Sure. That's why I thought the mention of it would strike you funny."

"What shall I call you? Nick?"

"Not by several mill-sites, if you please."

"What, then?"

"Call me Slick. That goes; and if you happen to run into anybody who knows me, you'll find friends."

"All right, Slick. Come along. It's getting late."

"Nonsense! It isn't ten yet."

"That makes no difference."

"Where are we going?"

"You are taking me home."

"Oh, am I? Where is that?"

"Only a few blocks farther on."

"Is that duffer Lacey there?"

"Not much he isn't."

"Where is he?"

"Somewhere out on the briny."

"Eh?"

"He has given up guning around the city, and has taken to the mighty deep, Slick."

"I don't think I'm on, Nan. What's the answer?"

"He has gone into piracy."

"Aw, come away with you, chile!"

"That's no dream, Slick."

"Piracy? Skull and cross-bones? Black flag? Plank-walking, and all that?"

"Sure thing."

"Nan, you're stringing me."

"I'm not."

"Why, a man wouldn't last thirteen minutes by the watch in that business these days."

"He has lasted about four months, and he thinks he is good for a year or two. He expects to gather in about a million, or two or three, by that time, and then he means to retire."

"What's he doing? A house-boat, shore business along the Sound?"

"Not much. He's the real thing. He has got a steamship three hundred and forty feet long, and I forget how wide."

"Nan, you have missed your calling; you really have. Old Ananias would have looked like a string of suckers alongside of you! He certainly would."

"On my word, Slick, I'm giving it to you straight. He sailed on the ship from here for South America. The ship was called the *Irene*. When he was a few days out he poisoned the captain and threw him overboard. Then he served some of the crew in the same way. The others joined him. They went in at a port somewhere and painted the boat all over again, changed her name and did a lot of other things, and since that time he has been

doing the hold-up act on the ocean whenever he can get a chance. If you don't believe me, I can prove it."

"I'd like to know how you can prove it. Not that I don't believe you; but——"

"I can show you his letters."

"You don't mean to say that he's crab-tree enough to write all about it in letters?"

"Yes, to me. He's in love with me, I told you. He wants to make his pile and then have me marry him; and then he wants to go in for the 'cottage-in-the-country' life."

"I don't think I'd call him, if I were you, Nan."

"I don't intend to; but why not?"

"Well, for one thing, these fellows who go around slinging poison into others get the habit after awhile, and he'd be likely to give you some of it; and, for another, I think he's a blooming liar."

"Why do you?"

"Because I don't believe that he's got a ship."

"I *know* he has. I'll prove it. I'll show you his letters."

"All right. If you're willing, I'd like to see them. That's straight."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER'S PROUDEST MOMENT.

Nan Drummond came to a stop in front of a house in one of the side streets not far from Madison Square, and turned and faced the detective.

"I've got something to say to you before we go inside," she said to him.

"Say on, Nan," he replied.

"I am ultrarespectable here, at my home. My aunt lives with me. She thinks that I write for the papers and magazines and get my money that way, and I wouldn't have brought you here at all if I hadn't thought you were all right and on the square. She used to think that Jimmy was a broker instead of a 'breaker'—safebreaker, you understand. She may be sitting up, and she may have gone to bed. If she is up, I'll introduce you as Mr. Carter. We can call each other by our first names. That's all. Are you on?"

"Sure thing."

"Come in, then."

A few moments later they were seated together in the parlor of the small flat. The aunt, fortunately, had retired.

"You've got it cozy here," said Nick. "Did you bring Lacey here, too?"

"No. I bring nobody here. I don't know even now why I have made an exception of you, unless it is because there is something about you that is different."

"I guess it was because I stepped between you and Jimmy," said Nick.

"Very likely."

"But say, Nan, I want to hear more about that pirate, Morgan, the buccaneer! Eh?"

"That's funny," said Nan. "I never thought about it before."

"About what?"

"Morgan, the buccaneer."

"Well, there was a buccaneer by that name."

"I know it, but I never happened to think about it in this connection before."

"What is there funny about it?"

"Morgan is Lacey's first name."

"Oh!"

"He's a bad egg, Slick."

"I don't doubt it."

"He has got a brother here in the city who looks as much like him as can be. I saw him on the street the other day, and I nearly fell in a fit, I was that sure it was Lacey."

"Is he a crook, too?"

"Not much! He's a good man. I wish I was half as good. But Lacey treated him like a dog, and then in the end tried to murder him."

"That is what he would do to you some day, Nan, if he had a chance."

"Oh, I'm onto that all right, Slick; don't you think I'm not. The brother's an actor. He goes by the name of Ike Smathers."

"I have seen him," said Nick. "'The man of many faces.'"

"That's him."

"I know him personally," said the detective.

"You do? Does he know that you are a crook?"

"He doesn't even suspect it, Nan."

"I'm glad of that."

"Would you like to make his acquaintance some day, Nan? I'll introduce you to him if you say the word."

"Maybe. I'll think about it. Just now I seem to think that one Lacey is enough."

"That brings us back to the other fellow. Where are those letters?"

"I'll get them."

And she did so.

There were three of them, and she gave them all to him to read; a thing which he was particular to do with exceeding care.

But it was the last one of the three only that interested him; and in that one he found this passage:

"I cannot fix the date exactly when I will be there, but you may look for me along about the last of June—say somewhere about the twentieth. I don't know whether I will sail directly into New York harbor, or go to Boston, or some other port instead. I haven't made up my mind to that part of it yet. But wherever I make port, I will lose no time in going to you, Nan."

"June twentieth," said Nick musingly. "That's a week from today, Nan. You haven't got any too much time if you want to give him the slip."

She laughed.

"He doesn't know where to find me," she said. "I have moved since he went away."

"That's the game, is it?"

"Yes. I shall keep under cover while he is here—unless I change my mind."

"What! And decide to sail with him under the black flag?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you take prussic acid? It's easier—and quicker."

To Nick's surprise, Nan was silent for a moment, while the expression of her face saddened perceptibly. Then, as if with sudden impulse, she said:

"Slick, I suppose you will say that I'm a fool, but—— Look at this!"

She thrust one hand into the bosom of her dress and drew forth a tiny phial.

"What is it?" asked the detective, although he knew before he asked the question.

"Prussic acid," she replied.

"What is it for?"

"For me."

"Aw, what are you giving me?"

"It is true. I carry it with me all the while. I have had it uncorked a dozen times, until you could smell the odor of bitter almonds all over the room."

"What have you done that for?"

"Because I have been on the point of swallowing it. And I would have done it, too, only for the effect it would have upon my aunt."

"But why?"

"I'm tired of it all, Slick—or, rather, Nick. I'd much rather call you that; just now, at least."

"Tired of what?"

"Of everything. Of the life I lead. Of the wrong I do. Of the fact that I am not honest. Of being a thief. I never would have been a thief, Nick, if Jimmy hadn't taught me to be one. Those were fine sentiments that he expressed to-night, but he had no hesitancy in teaching an honest girl to steal, and, in fact, almost driving her to it.

"When I became his wife I had no idea what he was. I thought as my aunt thinks now, that he was a broker. He never told me differently, either, for two years, and then I discovered it by accident.

"I don't know now how I got to looking upon thieving and stealing with complacency. From complacency, I gradually came to passive consent, and from that it was a short step to active participation. I remember the first time I ever took part in a robbery. I remember it well. Jimmy had a big job on hand, and his pal who was to help him through with it got pinched for something else before it was brought off. Jimmy was up a stump, and he thought he'd have to chuck up the whole thing.

"Then, one night—the night before it was to be brought off—he said to me:

"'You could help me out, Nan, if you only would.'

"I asked him how, and he told me that all I'd have to do would be to dress up in masculine attire and stand watch outside while he did the job."

"And you consented, I suppose?" said Nick.

"Not at first; but I did, finally. We came near to getting caught, too, because I fell asleep at my post, he was gone so long."

"What happened?"

"A big copper came along and shook me. He shook me so hard that my hat fell off and my hair came tumbling down around my shoulders. He saw then that I was a woman, if he hadn't already found it out when he took hold of me."

"And what hapened then?"

"I had a billy in my hand—a black-jack, some people call them. It was made of leather and loaded with lead. I smashed the copper in the face with it and laid him out. I thought I had killed him, he laid so still; but I didn't wait long to find out. I went on a jump after Jimmy, and tipped him the nonk. He was just coming out with the swag when I got to him, and we got away all right.

"He said I was a bird and was worth a dozen men. I was glad that the cop got over it, though."

"He did get over it, did he?"

"Yes—and told the newspaper reporters who interviewed him that he had been attacked by five men. I laughed about it then, and after that I was dead easy for Jimmy."

"I suppose he gave you lessons after that, didn't he?"

"Yes. In all sorts of things. But I don't want to talk about it any more. I suppose you think I'm a little fool, don't you?"

"Yes; for wanting to kill yourself."

"It is only because I am so ashamed of myself for being a thief that I ever do want to take my own life."

"Then why don't you do the other thing?"

"What other thing?"

"Reform. Quit the game altogether."

"What! *You* advise me to do that?"

"Yes. I have thought of doing it myself, Nan."

"Honest Injun, Nick?"

"Yes."

"Then you understand me, don't you?"

"I think I do."

She sighed deeply.

"It's too late now," she said.

"Charles Reade once wrote a book which he named 'It Is Never Too Late to Mend.'"

"I know that. I have read it."

"Why don't you follow the advice?"

"I cannot understand your giving me such a line of talk, Nick."

"Well, there might be a good many reasons for it. I might say that you are naturally a good woman, and that you show the fact in your face; that you are much too beautiful to make yourself a crook; that the ultimate harvest of crime is prison and death; that there is never any recompense for it; that all crooks must of necessity be pariahs and outcasts, Ishmaelites and moral lepers; that in reformation there is still happiness for you. I might say that you are too sweet a woman, too good a woman, too pure a woman, to condemn yourself to such a life, and to look ahead to only one thing—years behind prison-bars. I might say all that, and more; or I might say, on the other hand, that one who feels as you do is apt to lose his or her nerve at the wrong moment, and so get caught. All the same, if I were you, feeling as you say you do about it, I'd quit the game right now."

"You almost convince me. If only——"

"What?"

"Nick, did you mean it when you said just now that you would like to live a good life, too?"

"I certainly did. I mean to do so, too—if I can, or as near as I can."

She left her chair and crossed the room until she stood directly in front of him. Then she extended her right hand, and, with tears in her eyes, she said:

"Nick, if you will pledge your word to me that you will never steal a thing again as long as you live, I'll give you the same pledge, and there's my hand upon it. Will you do it?"

"I will," said Nick, and they clasped hands on the compact; and it was about the proudest moment of Nick Carter's career.

CHAPTER VII.

BAREFACED JIMMY'S DEFIANCE.

Nick Carter felt that things were rapidly becoming altogether too intimate, and that it was, therefore, time for him to take his departure.

He picked up his hat and moved toward the door, but she intercepted him with a gesture.

"You are not going already?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "It is almost eleven o'clock."

"You are going to keep to that compact you have made with me?"

"To the letter, Nan. I pledge you my solemn word that from this moment I will never steal a thing or take a thing that does not belong to me, as long as I live."

"And I pledge you mine. Let us shake hands on it again. Thank you. Now, tell me."

"Yes?"

"How shall you make a living? An honest living?"

The detective laughed.

"I will find a way," he said.

"How shall I make a living? To tell you the truth, Nick, I do not know. I have a good education, but of what use is that to me? I would not dare to go out as a governess, lest some day the parents of the children I taught might learn of my past record. I might offer myself as a 'trying-on model' in a cloak-house, but I hesitate to do that. Jimmy, or some of the men I know, would be sure to want me to help them to rob the place. I might——"

"Can you sing?" asked Nick.

"Yes. I have a good voice, I think."

"Then I will tell you what to do. I see you have a piano here. Study up three or four, or half a dozen, good domestic songs, and in the meantime I will have a talk with Mr. Pettis, the manager at Crawford's Theater. I can get you an engagement there for a week, at least, and, if you do well, he will send you around the circuit. Adopt a stage name, and the rest is easy."

"But could I do it?"

"Certainly you could do it. You have the face, the figure, and the presence, and you say you have the voice. All that you need more than that will be a few fine dresses."

"I have those already."

"I wouldn't wear them, Nan, if I were you. They are purchased with the proceeds of the profession you have abandoned, and you want nothing more to do with that. The thing for you to do in order to stick to the new life is to begin clean."

"But——"

"Wait a moment. We haven't known each other very long, but we have made a compact together which puts us on the footing of real old friends. You can adopt me as a sort of half-brother, and in that way I can advance you all the money you need, and you can return it to me a little at a time out of your salary."

There were tears in her eyes again, as she replied:

"But suppose that I should not succeed?"

"That isn't to be thought of. You *will* succeed."

"How does it happen that you know this manager so well that you think you can influence him? How is it that you know so many people who lead honest lives?" she asked.

"Oh, that has been a point with me always—to know honest people. I like them. I find that they are worth knowing. And now I must go. I will see Mr. Pettis before I go to bed to-night, for fortunately I know where he is to go after the theater and where to find him. In the morning I will send you an envelope with some money in it——"

"I don't like to use your money——"

"Fudge! Wouldn't you rather use that when you have the certain knowledge that you are going to pay

it back again with the proceeds of honest employment, than to wear clothes that were purchased with other people's money which you can never return? Don't talk foolishly. I will send you some money and a card of introduction to Mr. Pettis stating at what hour he will receive you. Then you are to go out at once and purchase an outfit to wear when you make your call upon him. Will you do that, in order to begin clean?"

"Yes. I will do it. I haven't been so happy in years as I am at this moment."

"I guess that's right."

"When shall I see you again?"

"I will come around as soon as you have seen Pettis, to find out how you made out with him."

"But suppose I should want to see you—suppose I should wish to send some word to you, how shall I address the envelope?"

"Just to Nick Carter, Madison Square Post-office."

"Your namesake—that detective—might get the letter."

"You need not have the slightest fear but what I will get the letter myself, all right. And that reminds me, if you should happen to hear again from that fellow Lacey, either by letter or wire, I want you to let me know about it at once; will you?"

"Yes; but why?"

"I shall make it my duty to protect you from him, that is all. Good night, now. I must go."

When the detective was in the street he walked rapidly away from the house and turned the corner down Broadway. Then he stopped, and, raising his eyes reverently, he murmured:

"Thank God for what I was permitted to accomplish to-night!"

Half an hour later he was admitted to Smathers' rooms, and he found there several of the actor's friends busily preparing for a game of cards, for they had just come in from the theater. Manager Pettis was one of the party, and Nick immediately called him into an adjoining room.

"Pettis," he said, "I have found you a regular song-bird; a beautiful young woman whom I wish to send to you to-morrow for a trial; and if she is at all available, I want you to engage her on the spot. Put her on for a week, anyhow, and give her a fair opportunity and pay her all the salary she is worth to you—and a little more."

"What's the game, Nick?" asked Pettis. "I often have men come to me with such requests as that where they offer to put up for the salary—but I didn't expect it from you."

"Hold on there, Pettis. Don't you go to jumping at conclusions. I wouldn't make the break at you unless I was pretty sure of my ground. I'll stand for the salary if she is a failure, and I'm perfectly safe in making the offer, too—and I'll bet you a hundred dollars that she is a success from the start."

"Humph! That sounds as if you knew what you are talking about, Nick."

"I think I do. Can you start her in next Monday, if she is all right?"

"Sure; and we happen to be in need of a woman of that sort, too."

"All the better."

"What's her name?"

"Nancy Nightingale," replied Nick, as glibly as if he and Nan had already agreed upon the stage name she was to adopt.

"Gee! But that's a peacherina of a name for a singer, isn't it?"

"Yes. And I think that you will find her to be a peacherina of a singer for the name," laughed Nick, as readily as if he had listened to Nan's singing every night for a year.

"All right, Nick. You can send her to me at eleven o'clock in the morning, at the theater."

"And in the meantime, as always, this conversation is not to be repeated in any form."

It should be stated right here that before Nick Carter retired that night he wrote a full account of his interview with Pettis to Nan, told her of the name he had chosen for her to adopt, advised her not to go upon the street for a few days without wearing a veil over her face, and he enclosed with it a sufficient amount of money to meet all her immediate necessities. And he closed the letter by again advising her not to forget to inform him the moment she heard from Lacey.

"Now, Ike," he said to Smathers the moment he returned to the room where the others were, "a word in private with you, and then I will be going."

In that other room, he said:

"Don't interrupt me until you have heard all that I have to say. I haven't much time. I merely wished to tell you that I have found Nan Drummond. I have been to her home with her, and I have read the letters which your—which Lacey has written to her. She has promised that she will let me know when she hears from him again, and so I think we may assure ourselves that he will not be at liberty very long after he arrives in New York. Don't ask me any questions now. I will tell you more at some other time. Good night."

He was gone before Smathers could expostulate, and it still lacked some moments of midnight when he was again upon the street.

One would have supposed that he would have sought his bed then; but Nick Carter is always tireless when there is something to be done.

His first act, therefore, was to step in at a drug-store and call up police headquarters to find out if the in-

spector was still at the office. Being informed that he was, he hurried to Mulberry Street.

"Inspector," he asked as soon as he was in the private office of the chief of detectives, "do you happen to know a South African crook named 'Barefaced' Jimmy Duryea?"

"Sure thing. He is just out of limbo. He's playing the reform racket for all it's worth, too, for awhile. But he's only laying low. He came over here from Africa when you were in Japan, did a bank job, got pinched, and was sent up for four years. That's how it happens that *you* don't know him, Nick. What about him, old man?"

"I suppose you have kept tabs on him since he came out, haven't you?"

"Betcher life!"

"I want to know where to find him. I want to see him to-night."

"I can have him brought here inside of an hour, if you like."

"No; I prefer to go where he is."

"All right. You will find him at Pete Grafter's saloon, in Bleecker Street. It isn't far from here. You can walk there in ten minutes. You know where it is?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with Jimmy? Has he broken his word to me and been using the drill again?"

"No. I want to talk with him, that is all. By the way, here is a letter that will interest you. I'll come around to-morrow and tell you all about it;" and he gave the letter that Smathers had received from his brother, to the officer.

Then he hastened from headquarters to the saloon in question, where the inspector had told him by way of additional information that Duryea had a room over the place, and, entering, he walked directly through to the back room.

There were several men there, and, among them, "Barefaced" Jimmy.

The detective drew near to the burglar at once. He was seated in a corner of the room by himself, and he raised his head and looked at the detective as the latter approached him.

Recognition was instantaneous, and the burglar leaped to his feet with a half-suppressed oath. Then he dropped back into his chair again, and, with apparent effort, smiled upon the detective.

"So!" he said. "It is you, is it?"

"Yes," replied Nick, taking the seat at the table opposite him.

"I suppose you have been looking me up, eh? What are you, anyhow? A fly cop, or a crook? I took you for the latter when I met you on Sixth Avenue. I suppose you went home with Nan, didn't you? And I also suppose that you are the last favorite, aren't you?"

"Jimmy," said Nick, with cold precision, "you know, and you believe in your heart that I know it, too, that Nan Drummond, who was once your wife, but who has now secured a divorce from you, whom you taught to steal and forced to assist you in your burglaries—you know that she is a good woman in all save that one thing. . . . *Don't you?*"

"Confound you, yes! What the——"

"Hold on. You asked me just now who I am."

"Yes."

"I am Nick Carter, Jimmy."

Duryea half-started to his feet; then he settled back again upon his chair and stared at Nick through half-closed lids, motionless, sphinxlike, and with not one trace of fear of any kind in his face or manner.

"Well?" he asked presently. "What of it? You are not here to pinch me. You may order me to fly the coop—to get out of town, or to go back to South Africa. But I won't go if you do. What's your next play, Nick Carter?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A GENTLEMAN CROOK'S PROMISE.

The detective settled himself in his chair and lighted a cigar. He offered another to Jimmy, which the latter accepted and also lighted. During this episode there was silence between them.

"Jimmy," said Nick, when these preliminaries were completed, "I am not here to pinch you. I am not here to put a single stone in your way. In fact, I am here to do you a service rather than to harm you."

"I'll swallow that when I know why you *are* here," was the laconic reply.

"It is about Nan."

"I suspected that."

"You threatened her in my presence, to-night."

"I meant what I said, all the same."

"I don't doubt it; I did not doubt it at the time."

"If I find out that she gave me the double cross, I'll slit her wizzen for her, if I swing for it."

"You won't find it out, because she did not do it."

"Much you know about it."

"I know that much about it, at least. She didn't do it."

"Who did do it, then?"

"Some other person whom you had taken into your confidence. Doubtless the man Lacey, if he had half a chance."

"He didn't—unless she told him; and that would be the same thing."

"He might have spied upon you. He knew your lay. He was and is in love with Nan. He would be the most likely one to want to put you away. But, before

you interrupt me, I want to say this: Although he is in love with her, she despises him."

"You don't know that; you only guess at it. You think——"

"Wait, now. I don't think at all; *I know!* Nan showed me every letter that Lacey has written to her; and women do not do that sort of a thing when they are in love with the writer of the letters."

"I'll grant you that, Carter. If she did that, it's all U P with Mr. Lacey so far as she is concerned; but, all the same, showing those letters to you was giving *him* the double cross, wasn't it? And if she would do it to one she would do it to another. It doesn't make any difference how much you hate or despise a person, that is no excuse for betraying that person."

"That is true, too, Jimmy. But she did not intend to betray him to me as a detective, for the reason that she thought, and still thinks, that I am a crook."

"Look here, Carter; answer me one question straight from the shoulder. It won't make any difference between us, no matter what you say. Are you in love with Nan yourself?"

"No. I am not. Positively not. I never saw her in my life until she claimed my protection to-night."

"Then what is your lay? What are you figuring on?"

"I have come here to get you to give me your word that you will not again molest her in any way whatever. To get you to promise me that if you see her again, on the street or anywhere else, that you will not appear to recognize her. To get your promise that from this time on, forever, you will keep yourself an utter stranger to her."

"It strikes me, Carter, that you are exhibiting about the most monumental proportion of cheek that I ever heard of. Nan is my wife."

"She is *not* your wife. She has a divorce, and you were served with the papers properly. You made no effort to defend the suit, contenting yourself with the thought of revenge when your time should have expired and you were free again. I want you to make me those promises, Jimmy."

"Suppose I should refuse you? What then, Carter?"

"I didn't come here to threaten you, Jimmy; I came to get those promises—and you are going to make them before I leave you."

"You seem to take a lot for granted, Mister Detective."

"I am not a detective at this moment; neither are you a crook at this moment. We are merely two men who are discussing amicably a matter of vital importance. I am Nick Carter and you are James Duryea—at least, that name is good enough for our purposes. You were born and bred and raised a gentleman; I know that. It sticks out all over you. You respect women, no matter what other things you do; I know that, too. You are a brave man, and it is a pleasure to me to find that you are not in the least afraid of me. Outside of your chosen calling, you are a square proposition, and I am positive of that, too. Wait a moment. Listen to me to the end."

"All right. Go on."

"I had a long talk with Nan to-night. You know that she was never more than passively a crook. You know that without your influence she would never have been one. You know that *you* are responsible for whatever wrong she has done in the past. You know that you married her under false pretenses, and that you gradually led her into your crooked life. You know all that, don't you? Tell the truth, now."

"Yes."

"To-night she told me much of her history. She said no word against you save that she was afraid that you would kill her because you believe that she betrayed you. Her bitterness toward you is solely because you led her into thievery. She has freed herself from you for that reason. But there is something more than all that."

"What?"

"She has reformed. She has quit the game for good and all. She is going on the stage, and I have already found an engagement for her through a friend of mine."

"I always said that she'd be a dandy at that game."

"I'm going to be perfectly straight with you and entirely frank with you, Jimmy."

"That's the only way with me. Go on, Carter. I have always heard that you were on the square, and I believe it now. You have learned to understand Nan better in the hour or two that you talked with her than I did during the three years we were married. Go on."

"I have induced Pettis, the manager at Crawford's, to give her a chance. She will appear there next Monday under the name of Nancy Nightingale. I want you to atone for the past by helping her to succeed now; and you can do that better than anybody else by keeping out of her way—and by sending her your personal assurance that you will do so."

"Hang you, Carter! You make me feel like a chump!"

"You have been a chump—to her."

"I guess that's right."

"Will you make me those promises?"

"Do you mean that you'll take my bare word for it?"

"I do."

Jimmy was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"Will you give me her address, Carter?"

The detective mentioned the street and number without an instant of hesitation.

"What about that fellow Lacey?" asked Jimmy, after another silence.

"I intend to arrest him for murder the moment I find him. He doesn't cut any ice at all in this transaction."

"Is she going to do the stool-pigeon act for you, in his case?"

"Certainly not. I have already told you that she believes that my profession and yours are the same. Now, Jimmy, it is up to you. You can make me your friend for life, if you will; but if you do not care about that, you can make *her* eternally grateful to you. I am talking now to the *man*, not to the crook; to the man who won her love, not the man who abused it; and to the man who I think pays his debts, either of revenge or gratitude, whenever he has an opportunity. You owe her that much, Jimmy."

"All right, Carter. I'll do it. And I'll tell you something more. I have intended to do it ever since I left her with you on Sixth Avenue to-night. That's straight."

"Jimmy, I'd like to shake hands with you now," said Nick.

"No you won't. My hands aren't clean. They haven't been clean since I was twenty. When I've washed them, I'll call around and see you—and shake."

"Are you going to wash them, Jimmy?"

"I'm going to try. That's what I was thinking about when you came in. If the coppers would let me alone—if the inspector would give me a free hand, maybe I could do it."

"I will promise you that they will do that much," said Nick.

"You were right a minute ago when you said that I was born and bred and raised a gentleman. I'm no sissy, but—well, I'm tired of the game. I'd give the works, if I had it, if I could blank out my record and begin clean. But, you see, it's a hard, up-hill road to travel, for a burglar—and the best in the business—to reform. I don't know whether I'll do it or not, Carter, but I am thinking about it; I am thinking about it."

"If I can do anything to help you by getting you a——"

"You can't. Much obliged, all the same. I don't want any help. If it is done at all, I have got to do it alone. But I'll promise you what you ask about Nan, and I'll keep my word, too."

"Thank you, Jimmy."

"Oh, cut it out. I don't want any thanks."

"Shall I tell Nan what you have said?"

"No. I will write to her and tell her myself. I'll do it before I go to bed to-night, too. She will hear from me in the morning before she is up. You have my word for it. I suppose you will be at the theater next Monday night, at her opening, Mr. Carter?"

"I expect to be there—yes."

"I think I will go, too."

"I will procure two tickets and send one to you. We will sit side by side," said Nick.

"All right. Send it around. Now, Mr. Carter, I want to change the subject for a minute."

"Well?"

"Do any of the fellows in this place know you? I mean those who were here when you came in?"

"I don't think so. I rarely see any of them without some sort of disguise. To tell the truth, I scarcely noticed who was here when I entered the room. I was so intent upon finding out that I came directly across the room to this table."

"And now you are sitting with your back toward the bunch. Well, when you came in there was one of them who looked and acted as if he recognized you. The minute you had passed him he leaned across the table and whispered to the gun who is with him. After a little they called two more over to their table, and they have been whispering together ever since; and every once in the while since we have been talking one or another of them has looked furtively over this way. It strikes me that they are cooking a dish for you, Mr. Carter."

"Possibly."

"If they should follow you when you go out, I'll take a little walk myself."

"Oh, don't do that. It isn't necessary. I have taken care of myself a good many years, and I reckon that I can do it now."

Nick rose as he spoke and extended his hand.

"Good night, Jimmy," he said. "Shake hands."

Reluctantly the burglar complied; and in a moment he was in the street.

But, instead of walking directly away along the street, he stepped into the hallway of the adjoining building and waited.

A moment later the four men to whom Duryea had referred came out together, and paused in front of the door, looking up and down the street in search of the detective; but almost at once Jimmy appeared behind them; and he said calmly:

"Come inside, boys, and take something. You don't want to follow that chap. He's a friend of mine."

Instantly they turned upon him, all four at once, while one of them cried out:

"Yes. We are onto you, all right. You're a bloomin' stool-pigeon, that's what you are!"

And before Nick Carter could make a move to prevent it, all four of them had leaped forward to the attack upon Barefaced Jimmy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DETECTIVE GETS BAD NEWS.

The mix-up that followed lasted a very short time.

For one thing, Jimmy was more or less prepared for the attack, and for another, Nick Carter was not two seconds in taking part in it.

He was surprised, too, at the science which Jimmy manifested in resisting the attack, for even before Nick reached the scene of action he had two of them sprawling upon the pavement.

But, even so, it would have gone hard with him if the detective had not been there, for the remaining two had thrown themselves upon him, and one of them was already in the act of plunging a knife into the burglar's vitals, when Nick Carter's fist caught him on the point of the chin and put him to sleep, while the knife flew out of his hand almost to the middle of the street.

And the instant that the detective struck the one, he seized the other, and, lifting him bodily, hurled him after the knife.

"That didn't take long, Jimmy," said Nick, calmly wiping his hands with his handkerchief. "Get up, you!" he added to one of the men, who was slowly struggling to his feet. Two others had taken to their legs, and the fourth was still where Nick's blow had placed him. "What have you got to say for yourself, Collins?"

"You know me, do you, you——"

"That will do for that. Yes, I know you. You can skip in a moment, and I want you to find your two pals who ran away, and tell them—and this dead one here, too—that the New York climate is sickly, just at present. If any of you are in town after ten o'clock in the morning, I'll see that you are sent to a summer resort up the Hudson."

"You're Nick Carter, ain't you? And this gun here is a stool-pigeon, ain't he?" grumbled the crook.

"I am Nick Carter, all right, but this man is no stool-pigeon. Your pal here is coming around. Pick him up and mosey; and don't forget what I told you."

"Good night, Mr. Carter," said Jimmy, a moment later. "I thought to help you out of trouble, but it was you who helped me. I will see you once more, at the theater."

An hour later Nick Carter was sleeping calmly in his bed at home.

The following morning, as soon as he had eaten his breakfast, he walked around to the Madison Square Post-office, and, as he had expected, he found there a note from Nan, just mailed, for the time stamped upon it was only fifteen minutes earlier than he received it.

"Please come to me as soon as you can," she wrote. "I have already sent to my old address and found another letter and a telegram there from Morgan Lacey, for one thing. For another, I have received your letter written last night, about your interview with Mr. Denis, and I wish to thank you for it as well as for what it contained; and for another, I have something of still greater importance to show you and to thank you for."

At nine o'clock he called upon her.

He was surprised at the change in her appearance. She was no longer the Nan he had met on the street the preceding night. She was a changed woman now.

There was a new light in her eyes; a new tone in her voice; a new pride in her bearing.

"I feel," she said to him, "as if all the world were bright and beautiful this morning. My troubles have all flown away. I am happy."

"I am very glad," replied Nick.

"First," she said, "I want you to read this letter from Jimmy. It came early this morning, brought to me by a messenger; and with it came a whole basket filled with roses, read it, Mr. Carter."

The letter was as follows:

"I am communicating with you, Nan, for the last time, by word or deed. I have been led—I won't tell you how—to see and to realize the error of my ways. I have promised a friend of yours, and I repeat the promise here and now to you, that I will never molest you again in any way. That goes.

"If we meet on the street, we will pass without recognition. If you should see me at the theater your opening night, you will know that I am there to applaud, not to hiss; to applaud the determination that has sent you there, rather than your singing or your acting, although I know you will succeed in that, too.

"It will probably be the last time that I will see you or that you will see me in this life—and I fear there isn't much hope of our meeting in the next. You are naturally a good woman, and I am glad that you are going to live true to yourself.

"That chap we met on Sixth Avenue has been to see me. We have talked it all over. He is on the square and will continue to be a good friend of yours, I know. I am satisfied that if you will follow the advice he gives you, you won't go wrong in anything.

"I won't offer you my friendship, for you know you have that, although you will not need it. It has been a curse to you in the past, and could not be of much benefit to you in the future; but I want you to know that I respect you and esteem you, and—if I ever get to where I can do it—I will pray for you. Good-by, Nan."

That was all.

Her eyes were filled with tears when Nick looked toward her again.

"Dear old Jimmy," she said. "There was always lots of good in him. But how did you do it? He isn't an easy man to approach, and threats never counted with him at all."

"He did it himself, before I saw him," replied Nick. "At least, he had already made up his mind to do it. Now, what about the letter and telegram from Lacey."

"First, I want to thank you for——"

"Tut, tut! Let me see that letter, please. We've got

to head Lacey off, or he will be interfering with your theatrical engagement."

Without further objection she placed both the letter and the telegram in the detective's hands.

"Dear Nan," the letter began. "I have arrived in New York, as you will see by the postmark. I have come after you. I have got the ship here, all right, and we'll be the king and queen of the sea for a time. I am going to look about me a bit and arrange for some plans that I am determined to carry out while I am here, and then I am going at once to you. You may expect to see me within twenty-four or forty-eight hours after you receive this. But I will send you a telegram when to look for me.

Yours with devotion,

"THE KING OF THE SEA."

"He has at least given himself a high sounding title," said Nick, as he laid the letter aside and opened the telegram. Then he read:

"Walk down Sixth Avenue, Twenty-third to Fourteenth, west side, at four this afternoon."

There was no signature to the message.

"At four this afternoon," mused the detective, aloud.

"No," said Nan. "Look at the date of the telegram. It was sent yesterday. It was four yesterday afternoon."

"You are right."

"And to-day he will be looking for me; the very day I have got to go about. And I must go at once, too, if I buy a lot of things and get to the theater at eleven."

"I'll send you a coupé," said Nick, rising. "You can keep it all day, and go about in that. When you leave it, pull down your veil. You will have no trouble in that way."

He left her at once and returned to his home—and there he found that Captain Rossiter was awaiting him.

"Mr. Carter," said the captain, "I have lived nigh onto eighty years, and I never knowed till this morning that I was always an old fool."

The detective laughed.

"Hardly that," he said. "You have come to tell me, I suppose, that the *Irene*, or, rather, the ship that was the *Irene*, succeeded in getting into the harbor without your knowing it; eh?"

"Aye, aye! That's it."

Nick was too generous to tell the old man that he had known it himself an hour earlier.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"Berthed over at Cannin-Jaun's Stores, in South Brooklyn."

"What color is the stone?"

"White."

"And what is her name?"

"*Nan Drummond.*"

"What!"

"That's her name. *Nan Drummond;* hails from Rio, where it is claimed that she has been made over from an old man-o'-war, or something like that."

"Are her papers all right?"

"There ain't been any objection raised to 'em as I can find, Mr. Carter."

"What name has the captain given himself?"

"Cap'n Jonas Atkins."

"You are positive, I suppose, that she is the *Irene?*"

"Sartin sure! Yes, sir."

"Did she get past you without your knowing it?"

"That's what she did."

"How did you find her out?"

"I heerd that a vessel had come in in the night. She passed quarantine all right, at daybreak. I looked her up."

"And recognized her at once, I suppose?"

"No, sir. That's why I said I was an old fool. I was fooled by her. I didn't think it was her at all at first; not until I got on her decks; but I was mighty dead sure of her then—as soon as I was aboard of her."

"So you *did* board her, did you?"

"Yes."

"Who did you see on board?"

"The cap'n."

"I just up an told him that I thought I had recognized an old acquaintance in that ship, and I gave him a rakin' down for darin' to——"

"*Whaaaaat!* Well! You certainly are an old fool."

"Ain't that what you wanted me to do?"

"No. A thousand times no. I am sorry that I ever saw you; sorry that I ever sent you down the harbor to look for the ship. You've spoiled everything. Now answer a few questions for me, and then I'll pay you off and let you go. When was it that you went aboard of her? What time this morning was it?"

"It wasn't this morning. It was yesterday morning."

"Great Scott! And where have you been all this time? Why didn't you report to me at once?"

"I couldn't. I've been sick."

"Sick!"

"Yep. Sick. I took a drink with that there captain, and I guess he put something strong in it, for when I waked up I was back on the *Nadja*, where the men on the launch had taken me. They thought I was drunk—but I wasn't."

"And when was that? When did you wake up?"

"This morning—about eight o'clock."

"What time was it when you took that drink yesterday morning?"

"About eight o'clock."

"Twenty-four hours ago!" said Nick. "Captain, if you were forty years younger, I would give you a thrashing that you wouldn't forget in a hundred."

"I'm sorry——"

"Oh, you need not be sorry. That doesn't help matters any. You said a moment ago that the ship is at Cunningham's Stores. Did you see her there this morning?"

"No; not since yesterday morning."

"Then it is a dead sure thing that she is not there now. But I will find out. They must have a telephone there."

"She could have discharged her cargo, and cleared, and got away by——"

"Captain, your usefulness is past. Don't talk," interrupted the detective.

CHAPTER X.

TWO STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES.

"Hello!" said the detective, over the phone, after a little. "Is that Cunningham's Stores?"

"Yes."

"You berthed a ship there yesterday morning—the *Nan Drummond*. I wish to know if she is there now?"

"No; she is not. We would like to know where in blazes she is, ourselves," came the reply.

"How is that?" asked Nick.

"We don't know how it is. All that we do know is that when we got down here this morning we found both of our night-watchmen drunk as lords and sound asleep, and the *Nan Drummond* was missing."

"Do you mean that she slipped away in the night, last night?"

"Yes."

"Have you any idea what time it was when she pulled out?"

"The watchman on the next pier says that it was about half past ten."

"Which way did she head after she got into the river?"

"We don't know."

"Did she have her clearances?"

"She entered and cleared at the same time; cleared for Liverpool, but I haven't any idea now that her captain had the least idea of taking her there. There was something queer about him."

"I suppose that is all the information that you can give me, isn't it?"

"Yes. I am making inquiries, however, and if you will give me your number——"

"I am Nick Carter. You will find my number in the book."

"All right. If I hear anything more I will let you know."

The detective returned to his chair, and the old captain, who was awaiting him, said:

"I hope you will forgive me, Mr. Carter. I am very sorry."

"All right, captain. The harm is done now. We won't cry over it. It won't help it any. You are like the old woman's parrot, that's all. You talk too much."

The detective paid him for his services and dismissed him; and then he gave himself up to the problem of finding that lost vessel, and her captain.

Presently he called his assistants to him and told them what had happened, and then he sent them in all directions to find out if the ship had been sighted anywhere.

But still he cared much less for the ship than he did about Morgan Lacey.

The latter he believed to be somewhere in New York, notwithstanding the fact that he must know, from what Captain Rossiter had said, that Nick Carter was on the lookout for him.

Nevertheless, there was a magnet which would hold him in New York, at least for a time. The same sort of magnet which attracts and holds all men—a woman.

The detective felt certain that Lacey would not leave the city without seeing Nan, no matter what risks he might have to run by remaining; and Lacey could not see her without first searching for her, for he did not know where she lived.

But now he resolved at once to lose no more time, and he betook himself at once to Nan's old address.

"I am looking for Miss Nan Drummond," he said to the woman who opened the door.

"It looks to me," replied the woman, "as if everybody in the city was looking for her to-day."

"Why?" said Nick. "Have others been here inquiring for her?"

"Two others; yes, sir."

"And will you tell me who they were?"

"I don't know that any more than I know who you are, sir. One was a man and the other was a woman. That's all I know about them."

"Did neither of them leave a name?"

"No."

"How long is it since they were here?"

"The man has been here twice. He came yesterday afternoon about half-past five. Then, this morning early, the woman came, and sure, sir, sugar wouldn't melt in her mouth, she was that sweet about her questions."

"Will you tell me about them, and what they had to say?" asked Nick.

"Yes. It ain't much. When the man came yesterday, he was all of a flurry, and said he wanted to see Miss Drummond at once. I told him she wasn't here, but he didn't seem to understand me. He said something about having been late to an appointment he had with her, and that he must see her instantly.

"'She ain't here any more,' I told him again.

"'Where is she, then?' he asked.

"'I don't know,' says I. 'She moved away and I don't know where she went.'

"He wanted to know how long ago, and I told him more than a month. Then he wanted to know how I forwarded her letters to her, and I told him that I didn't forward them at all, but that she came here for them when she wanted them.

"'Are there any letters here for her now?' he asked then.

"'That's none of your business,' says I; and with that he went away."

"When did the woman come?" asked Nick.

"This morning, early. She said she was an old schoolmate of Miss Drummond's and wanted to find her badly; but I soon convinced her that I couldn't help her at all. And then *she* up and asked me if there were any letters here for Miss Drummond, and I told her that I didn't think there were any. She went away then."

"Madam," said Nick, "I happen to know that Miss Drummond came around here this morning and got her letters; or, rather, one letter and a telegram. She told me about it herself, and it is not her for whom I am seeking, but the people who came here to see her. Now, can you tell me if that woman was here this morning before or after Miss Drummond was here herself?"

"It was after, thank goodness!"

"And the man came here the second time after that?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he have to say then?"

"When I went to the door, he shook a roll of bills in my face, and he said to me:

"'It is a matter of life and death that I find Miss Drummond at once. If you will tell me where I can find her, I will give you five hundred dollars.'"

"What did you say to that?" asked Nick.

"I told him that I couldn't tell him any more than I had if he gave me five thousand dollars; and with that he went away, too. But he didn't go very far away. He stood on the front steps for a long time, and then he walked up and down the street for awhile; but I haven't seen a sign of him for the last hour, so I guess he's gone."

"But, all the same, you do know where Miss Drummond lives now, don't you?"

"If I do, you won't find out one anybody else from me."

"Good! That's the kind of talk I like. I'm much obliged to you. Good morning."

"Wait a minute, sir. Is it true that you are a friend of hers?"

"Quite true, yes."

"Are you likely to see her before long, do you think?"

"Probably. Yes."

"Will you give her a message for me?"

"With pleasure."

"Tell her this, then: That, although that man who came here twice asking for her was not at all like the man I mean, still he had the same voice and the same walk to the life, of that Morgan Lacey who used to annoy her all the time. It was on his account that she left my house, and I never thought any good of him."

"Morgan Lacey is the man I want," replied Nick. "I am a detective officer."

"I suspected it. I suspected that he was the kind you'd be after, too. He won't come again, more's the pity, or I'd ask you to come in and wait. Will you tell her what I said?"

"Yes."

It was now almost noon, and Nick walked slowly down Broadway toward Crawford's theater, timing himself so that he might be reasonably sure that Nan would have finished with her trial by the time he got there.

She had finished and gone, as Pettis quickly told him.

"How did she do?" asked Nick.

"Simply out of sight, old man! You were right when you called her a song-bird. She is. I am going to start her at fifty a week, but she'll be getting a hundred before the season is over. She's a beauty, too—and a lady; and that name—Nan Nightingale—is just the honey for her."

"Then you are not sorry that I sent her to you, are you?"

"Sorry? It's the best trick you ever turned for me. I'll get the credit of finding her."

"Sure. My name must not be mentioned."

"She came in style, too; in a coupé."

"I told her to do that. I was afraid she might be followed. You didn't see anybody standing around as if waiting for her, did you?"

"No."

"I am glad of that."

"Say, there isn't any danger of her not showing up Monday, is there?"

"Not the least, Pettis."

"I'm glad of that. I told her to get some photographs taken this afternoon, and to tell the photographer to send them directly to me. I'm going to feature her for the week. I wish you would tell me something about her for the press agent to use, Carter."

"Why not make a mystery of her? A mystery is always the most interesting of all things. Make her a sort of 'manuscript in the red box' affair. Just say that she bobbed up serenely from nobody knows where, and let your press agent vaguely hint that it is suspected that she is a young princess in disguise, who has fled to this country to escape a marriage that is hateful to her."

"By Jove, Carter! Say, you don't want a job as press-agent, do you?"

"Not to-day, thank you."

The detective returned home then, and to discover

that Chick had telephoned in that the *Irene*, now known as the *Nan Drummond*, had probably succeeded in getting safely to sea without being discovered. At all events, no trace of her could be found.

"Anyhow," the detective thought, "I know that Lacey is still in the city; or, at least, that he was here a few hours ago, so it is a sure thing that he is not aboard that ship.

"The thing for me to do now is to figure out about where and how he will search for Nan. What method he will take. I think I will go around and see Smathers."

Smathers was at his rooms; in fact, he had only just breakfasted and was engaged in looking through the morning papers when the detective arrived there.

"I am glad you came over, Nick," he said. "I was intending to look you up, presently. I've had another letter from Morgan."

"You have? When did it come?"

"This morning. There it is on the table. Read it. It's short."

Nick took the letter and read aloud:

"I am here, Ike, but not for long; you are here, too, but likewise not for long. If you have any arrangements to make, you had better attend to them. Your time is short. I must get back to my realm, for I am now King of the Sea."

"Funny, isn't it?" said Smathers.

"Yes. Quite so. I am going right out again, Smathers, but I want you to wait here for me because I shall return in less than half an hour. Then I will have something to say to you."

"All right, old chap. I'll be here."

The detective hurried out. He hastened up the street and directly to Nan's address, for he had suddenly experienced what some people call a "hunch" that it would be well to find out if Nan was all right; and that without delay.

But when he rang the bell and Nan's aunt responded to it, she told him that her niece had not returned since she went out early that morning—that is, at half-past nine.

"Nan said she'd be back at noon," she told Nick, "but now it's two o'clock and she hasn't come. I'm worried about her, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

A BOLD ABDUCTION.

"Still engaged in shopping, doubtless," was the detective's thought as he hurried away from the house and back to Smathers' rooms. "I'll bet if one should import a Hottentot woman who had never in her life worn anything more elaborate than a fig-leaf, she would take to the shopping habit within twenty-four hours as naturally as a duck takes to water."

But, notwithstanding this effort to joke with himself, he could not deny the fact that he was exceedingly anxious.

He was aware of the resourcefulness of Morgan Lacey; he knew him to be a man who would stop at nothing to accomplish his design of finding and—if necessary—abducting Nan.

"Some things have happened within a short time," he said to Smathers, when he arrived there, "concerning which I have decided to make you acquainted."

And then, without further preamble, he related everything that had occurred in connection with his providential discovery of Nan, from the moment he met her until now. In conclusion he said:

"I want you, Smathers, to so conduct yourself that Nan will never have a suspicion that you have an idea who she really is."

"I will certainly do that."

"And I want you to stand her friend in every way that it is possible."

"I'll do that, too."

"You will find her to be a beautiful woman, and a good woman at heart, notwithstanding her past."

"I think," said Smathers quietly, "that I owe it to her to be her friend."

The reader must understand that this was Thursday, and should remember that it was now three o'clock in the afternoon. Nan was to appear at the theater for her first performance the following Monday afternoon, so there were in reality only three days, and one of them Sunday, until that time.

And somewhere in the city, searching for Nan, was Morgan Lacey; Lacey, who was already warned of the fact that Nick Carter was aware of his presence in town; Lacey, who somewhere had a steamship awaiting him with which he could sail away to sea at any moment he might go aboard of her; Lacey, who would not hesitate to use force in order to abduct "Nancy Nightingale"—who would not hesitate to take all kinds of chances and to forego everything else in order to accomplish that one desire.

When he left Smathers shortly after four, he again went around to the house where Nan lived with her aunt; but she had not arrived.

Then, when he was on his way home it occurred to him to visit the Madison Square Post-office, where he had told her to address him.

He found a letter there, too.

It was written on the stationery of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where she had evidently stopped while on her way home from the theater purposely to write it.

It was only a hasty note written to acquaint him with her good fortune. It read:

"12:15 P. M.

"DEAR MR. CARTER: I cannot go home until I have sent you a line to tell you of my great good fortune. Mr. Pettis was exceedingly kind and professed to be greatly pleased with my singing. He has given me an engagement. I am to make my first appearance on Monday. My salary will be fifty dollars a week. Isn't it just grand? That old life is all dead to me now, and I am far happier at this moment than I ever expected to be—and I owe it all to you, dear friend. I sign myself here with the name that I shall hereafter use as my own, for I have dropped the other one for good.

"NANCY NIGHTINGALE.

"P. S.—What a beautiful name it is that you were so thoughtful to select for me. But somehow you do everything beautifully.

"P. P. S.—I am going from here directly to Sarony to have my pictures taken. N. N."

Here, at least, was a clue, and the detective lost no time in hurrying around to Sarony's studio.

"I am seeking Miss Nightingale," he said, as soon as he arrived there. "She was to sit for her picture, I think. Has she been here?"

"Yes, indeed," was the reply. "I made several excellent negatives of her. It is rarely——"

"What time did she leave here?" asked Nick abruptly.

"At half-past one, sir."

"And did she happen to mention where she was going?"

"No."

"Thank you," said the detective, and he hurried away. Outside the studio, on the street, he paused, and while he stood there a man in the uniform of a cab-driver lurched unsteadily up to him, almost falling prone upon the pavement just as he got near enough to speak to Nick; but the detective caught him and held him on his feet.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the man, rather thickly. "Don't think I've been drinking, please, for I have not. I never touch it at all. If I had done so you could smell it."

"Then what is the matter?" asked Nick, who fancied at the moment that there was something familiar in the appearance of the man.

"I have been drugged, sir. Tell me, aren't you the gentleman who engaged me over at the square to drive the lady to the stores and then to the theater, and after that wherever she should want to go?"

"Yes," replied Nick eagerly. "I was just thinking that I would give a five-dollar bill to be able to find you—and you shall have it. What has happened? What is the matter?"

"I'm a bit dazed yet, sir; but it was this way: I drove——"

"Get down to facts, and tell me what happened right here. I know that the lady came to Sarony's studio."

"Well, sir, when she went inside she says to me, 'Driver, I shall be in here for some time; probably an hour or more;' and I says, 'All right, lady. Then I'll feed the horse.'

"So I gets out the nose-bag and fixes it, and then I opened the door of the coupé and sat just inside, with my feet out on the step.

"Then along comes a cove who stops and asks me about points of interest in the city, sayin' that he's a stranger in town and wantin' to know if I'm engaged. I tells him I am, but he keeps on talkin' and brings out a cigar and lights it; and then, as if it hadn't occurred to him before, he offers me one, too.

"I thinks to myself that there's plenty of time, and I lights the cigar and smokes it; and he stands there a-watchin' me with a grin on his face, when all of a sudden he says good 'ay and mosey's along up the avenue.

"I remember, sir, that I got mighty sleepy all of a sudden, and that I leaned my elbow on the seat inside the coupé; and after that I don't remember nothin' at all until I wakes up in the back room of a saloon over on Sixth Avenue, with a splittin' headache, and so leery that I can't stand on my two feet.

"Then I comes here as soon as I can, and finds you; and that's all."

Nick had hailed a passing hansom while the man was talking, and now he told him to climb into it, first asking the location of the saloon and then directing the driver of the hansom to take them there.

At the saloon he directed the coupé-driver to follow him inside.

"Who brought this man here?" he demanded of the bartender.

"Another driver," was the reply. "He said this man was a mate of his and that he'd got a jag which he wanted him to sleep off, so's he wouldn't be fired. He told me not to give him anything more to drink, and left him here."

It was all plain to Nick now.

Lacey had been on the watch. He had seen Nan and recognized her. After that he had followed her. He had drugged a cigar with opium, and so had put the driver out of business, and then he had waited, in the guise of a driver, outside the studio for Nan to return.

As soon as Nan entered the coupé when she left the

studio, he had driven rapidly away; so rapidly that it would be impossible for Nan to leave the vehicle when she discovered that she was not being taken in the right direction.

But where had he taken her? Where could he take her at that time of the day, where she could not raise an alarm which would call somebody to her assistance?

"A beautiful woman like Nan could induce anybody to come to her aid," he mused. "She would not hesitate to call through the window for assistance, and, if she did that, somebody would have responded—anybody would respond; therefore Lacey must have fastened the drop-windows in the doors so they could not be opened.

"Humph! He could do that with a hammer and a few tacks. Also with a hammer he could break off the inside handle of the latches on the doors, so that she could not open them.

"But it would not be very long before Nan, with her spirit and courage, would smash the windows and call to the passers-by along the street; but still I must consider that she probably would not think of doing that at once.

"Now, where would he drive with her? Where would he *dare* to drive with her?

"Somewhere into the country would be the safest place, but he would not have time for that. Any country road which is lonely enough to permit him to dare to get down from the box and approach her would be altogether too far away for him to undertake it. There was nobody waiting for her inside the hack, to hold her, because she would have seen such a person and have refused to enter. He could not drug her as he did the cabby, for obvious reasons.

"Where would he dare to take her?

"The boldest way would be the best for him.

"I wonder if he would dare to take her to a police station and make some charge against her, calculating that she would be held long enough for his purposes and that he could appear in another disguise a little later, and take her out?

"No; that wouldn't work. She would checkmate such a scheme as that herself.

"Where *could* he take her?"

So intent was he in his meditation, standing there on the pavement near the side door of the saloon, that he had not noticed that the two drivers were conversing together with some animation; but now he was attracted by it.

"I see that you fellows know each other," he said to them.

"Yes, sir," replied the man who had been drugged. "We work for the same stable—around in Twenty-second Street, near Third Avenue. Mike was tellin' me that he seen my coupé—or thinks he did, between half-past one and two."

"Where?" asked the detective, interested at once.

"In Twenty-eighth Street, crossin' Madison Avenue, sir. He says he's sure about the horse, and he ought to know, for he drives him sometimes himself. Mike had a fare inside at the time and he couldn't stop, and, anyhow, the coupé was goin' too fast for him to catch it."

"Through Twenty-eighth Street?" asked Nick.

"Yes, sir."

"Going east?"

"Yes, sir."

He turned then to the driver of the hansom.

"Are you positive about that?" he asked.

"I'm dead certain about it, and no mistake, sir," was the reply.

And then, as clearly and as suddenly as a search-light bores a hole through the night, it all became clear to Nick Carter.

He remembered that he had said to himself that the boldest way would be the best way for Lacey, and now he understood what that "boldest way" would be.

"Bellevue Hospital is over in that direction," he thought quickly. "At the psycopathic ward they will accept anybody for the time being—or, at least, until sanity is established. Lacey had only to drive there and insist that she was suddenly insane. He had only to have somebody in waiting there for him—or to wait himself while another acted as the driver of the coupé. There would be no difficulty at all in inducing them to receive her to be held for examination as to her sanity. If she broke the windows of the coupé, the act would be an argument against her."

He leaped inside the hansom, calling out:

"To Bellevue Hospital! Quick!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT ON THE "IRENE'S" DECK.

To the doctor who greeted him, Nick explained:

"I wish to know if a patient was received here, at the psycopathic ward, about or near two o'clock—a

young woman; a very beautiful woman. Unfortunately I do not know how she was dressed, but she has large, baby-blue eyes, hair like polished copper, and a figure like a Circe. She probably broke out the windows of the coupé which brought her here; she would have tie-nied that she was insane; she might have begged you to send for Mr. Pettis, the manager at Crawford's theater, and doubtless she insisted that the name of the man who brought her here was Lacey—a statement which he would deny."

The doctor was smiling when Nick ceased his explanation.

"Your statement of the case is very clear," he said, "for you have told exactly the things that happened. She said her name was Nancy Nightingale, which——"

"Then she is here?"

"No; she was taken away again within half an hour. She has been gone about an hour."

"Who took her away?"

"A man who announced that he was Nick Carter's friend and had been sent after her."

"It was a lie," said Nick. "I am Nick Carter in person."

"All the same she went with him willingly enough."

"That was because my name was used."

"In that case," suggested the doctor, "you might succeed in tracing the coupé, Mr. Carter. I happened to go outside at the time, and I noticed that she left here in the same vehicle which brought her here. The windows were broken—both of them——"

Nick did not wait for him to complete the sentence, but was out of the building in a jiffy.

"It is like looking for a needle in a haystack," he muttered; "but, all the same, there is a chance."

Some boys were playing ball in the street, and he called to them, at the same time exhibiting a handful of change.

"Have any of you boys noticed a coupé with broken windows in which a lady and a——"

"I have!" three of them cried out at once.

"Which way did it go when it left here?" asked the detective.

"To the river, mister. And the man got out with the lady in his arms and went onto a tugboat that was waitin' there; and the tugboat went away up the river, mister."

The boys turned as if by mutual understanding and looked toward the river as they ceased speaking, and then one of them exclaimed:

"There she comes now, mister. That's the same tugboat, mister."

The detective tossed the handful of coins upon the pavement and left the boys scrambling for them while he dashed away toward the pier at full speed.

He leaped upon the tugboat before the lines were made fast to the wharf, and, showing his shield, which he rarely exhibited, he said rapidly to the man at the wheel:

"Reverse your engines and back out into the stream again. I am Nick Carter, and I will give you five hundred dollars to divide between you and your crew if you will take me as fast as you can to the same place where you took the man and woman about an hour ago, and if you will fight for me when we get there, if there is any fighting to be done."

The bells had been given, and the engines were reversed before he had ceased speaking.

"I can get you there in twenty minutes, or less," said the captain. "I had my suspicions that everything wasn't straight about that business, but what was I to do? I've got four men aboard besides myself, sir, and they'll be hot after their share of that five hundred."

They were already headed up toward the Sound, and the tug was a lively one, too.

"You took them to a ship, didn't you?" asked Nick.

"Yes."

"Where is she? At anchor, or at a dock?"

"She was lying at the end of a pier, sir. There ain't no place to anchor around here; but she had steam up, and maybe she'll be moving by this time."

"If she should be moving and you catch her and tie to her so that we can board her, there will be an extra hundred for your own pocket, captain; and if your tug is damaged, I'll pay the freight, even if you send her to the bottom. My word is good."

"I know that, sir."

The ship—the *Irene* with her name changed—was moving when they sighted her.

She had just started ahead and was already making good speed while they were still half a mile away from her, and Nick soon discovered that she was faster than the tug.

When he was about to make some remark about this,

the captain, who had been studying the situation, remarked:

"There is only one chance of our overtaking her now, sir."

"What is that?" asked Nick.

"It is that maybe she'll have to slow down before she goes through Hell Gate. If there should happen to be a tow coming this way, and about half-way through when she gets there, that is what she'll have to do; but if there isn't——"

"If there isn't," said Nick, "you will put me ashore as quickly as you can and I'll telephone to Fort Schuyler to have a revenue cutter put out from there and head her off."

It is not an unusual occurrence—in fact, it is a very common one—for just such a thing as the captain mentioned to happen. Most all large vessels are compelled to slow down in the passage of Hell Gate, anyway, and particularly if they happen to be passing a smaller craft, for the wash is so great that there is always danger of swamping the smaller craft.

And probably it would not occur to Lacey that he would be pursued so soon. He was doubtless thinking that he had gotten safely away with his capture; nor would he recognize the tug that had taken him to his ship, for there are always dozens of tugs darting about in that locality, and they all look very much alike.

Besides, Lacey would be on the bridge of his vessel, navigating her, and his eyes would be looking ahead, not astern of his ship.

The hoped-for event did happen.

There was a tow, and a large one, half-way through the dangerous passage, and the *Irene* did have to slow down and stop before she entered the narrow channel.

"Now is your time," said Nick.

"I see it," was the captain's reply.

They were headed, fortunately, against the swiftly running tide, which helped to bring the *Irene* to a stop much quicker than would otherwise have been the case.

The crew of the little craft were prepared. They stood well forward, and, as their captain laid the tug alongside of the *Irene*, just abaft of amidships, one of the crew, followed by Nick Carter, climbed over the rail to her deck with ropes in their hands, and in an instant they were made fast, and the six men had clambered to the *Irene's* deck.

All eyes there had been turned forward, and it was not known that they were boarded until Nick Carter leaped upon the bridge of the steamship, and, seizing Lacey, who was standing there, in his arms, he lifted him and hurled him bodily over the rail to the deck below, calling out to the captain of the tugboat, who was there to receive him:

"Tie him fast with a heaving-line!"

He turned as he spoke, and with one blow after another laid low the two men who had been on the bridge with Lacey.

Then, with a bound, he leaped over the rail to the deck below, and joined with the tugboat captain and his crew of four in the fight that was already taking place with the crew of the *Irene*, all of whom had rushed upon the little group.

Still, there were thirty of these men and only six in Nick's party, and it is likely that the fight would ultimately have gone against the detective had not a Governor's Island tug been passing at the moment, with fifty soldiers aboard, who were being transferred from the island to Fort Schuyler.

Nick discovered it even as he leaped from the bridge to the deck, and he took the time to run to the rail and shout to them:

"Give us some help, will you?"

The men on the cutter responded with a yell of assent, and just at the moment when every man in Nick's party was down, save himself, and when he was hemmed in on all sides by the advancing throng of pirates who had now drawn knives and other weapons, the soldiers swarmed over the sides of the *Irene*, and, with a loud shout, dashed to the rescue.

They had only their fists to use as weapons, but they used them mightily—as good Americans soldiers might be expected to do in an emergency of this kind.

Still, the men of the *Irene* fought stubbornly, and gave back only inch by inch.

But Nick Carter, suddenly leaped in front of the soldiers, and, waving his arm over his head, he shouted:

"Rush them now, boys! Rush them!"

They obeyed him; and it was the last rush of the fight.

In less than a minute after that, every man Jack of the pirate crew was on his back, either unconscious, or held down by one of the soldiers.

The instant when Nick saw that the fight was won, he turned and ran toward the cabin; and he was only just

in time, for at the entrance to it he came upon Morgan Lacey, who was dragging himself painfully along the deck toward it.

Lacey saw the detective, and raised a pistol to kill him; but Nick sent it flying from his hand into the river with a kick; but even then, before the detective could do aught to prevent the act, Lacey raised the other hand to his lips, put something into his mouth, bit upon it, and then, with a horrible grimace, fell back, dead.

He had taken a large dose of poison which he had kept in readiness for that moment.

And this is the end of the story.

Nan was found uninjured, in the cabin where she had been tied to a chair, and there were tears of thanksgiving in her eyes when she realized that she was saved.

There is but little more to tell, save that the *Irene* was returned to the owners, and the men who had formed her crew were handed over to the government authorities for trial.

Nan Nightingale made her appearance on the following Monday, and won a signal success. She is still on the stage.

But there was one disappointing thing about that first night—to Nick, at least; which was that Jimmy Duryea did not make his appearance, nor could any trace of him at the time be found.

And on that night, after the performance, when Nick Carter went behind the scenes to congratulate Nan, she said to him:

"Tell me the truth, please. You were never a crook, were you?"

"No," he replied. "I was always Nick Carter, the detective; and I expect I will be so to the end of the chapter."

THE END.

The next number, 507, will be "Barefaced Jimmy, the Gentleman Crook; or, Nick Carter's Amazing Experiment," to appear next week.

ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE

TIP TOP WEEKLY

WE receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 700 are entirely out of print. We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 150 entitled "Frank Merriwell's Schooldays." We give here with a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

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